

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

No. 20

MARCH 13th, 1940

DEAR MEMBER,
It is not often that anything comes through from Russia to tell us of spiritual conditions there. Special interest, therefore, attaches to the following extracts from a letter from a woman who spent ten months in a Soviet prison. Being the widow of a non-Russian, she has been able to leave Russia with her children instead of being sent to a concentration camp. The friend who received the letter tells me she is a woman of remarkable faith and character. He asked her on one occasion whether Russia is likely to remain Christian. She replied: "What a strange question to put; the country is more Christian now than it has ever been before. Do you really think men defeat God? Does the Church consist of buildings or of a community of people? And Russia has never had such a fellowship among the believers as she has now."

A LETTER FROM RUSSIA.

She says in her letter: "There were many cases when parents were arrested because they had been denounced by their children. Teachers tell children not to obey their father and mother and to denounce them. Children run away from home, live in dens, and become completely demoralised. After one, two or three years in prison they sink still lower. I tried to speak to some girls of God and of the Christian life, but it was no good: the idea that there was no God and that everything was permissible appealed to them.

"I will quote the example of my own son, a schoolboy in the fifth form. He used to go to church with me, to pray in the evening. Once, on the eve of Palm Sunday, we were preparing to go to the evening service when the doorbell rang and a crowd of children rushed in. 'We have come for you, we are the shock-brigade of the Godless, come to the meeting.' My son at first refused, but in the end was led away.

On Easter Eve the same brigade came for him. All the children had to spend the whole night at school, and in order that they should not run away to church service their coats were locked up. When Christmas came, my son returning from school said: "Mummy, give me an ikon; to-day there will be a bon-fire on the lake and all schoolboys will throw ikons into it." I refused, of course, to give him an ikon, and he stayed at home.

"To denounce a priest it is enough to say that he has baptised a child without the parents' permission. The permission is not valid unless certified by a document issued by the institution where the parents are employed. If such a document is applied for, the parents naturally lose their job and all means of existence with it, for believers are regarded as counter-revolutionaries. For a wedding or a funeral a similar permission is required. Two girls were expelled from school because their mother made them wear new frocks on Easter Sunday.

The result of all this persecution is that religion plays an ever-growing part in people's lives, draws them together, makes them kindlier and more responsive. Only the most faithful remain among the clergy. Many young priests accept persecutions and exile with a glad spirit. There was a case of a young man who, at the age of 18, took orders, went into exile and there gave spiritual comfort and succour to many people. Besides clergy there is now a large number of women missionaries at work in Russia. They learn by heart the New Testament and the main parts of the Prayer Book. Equipped with this knowledge they go from one Christian home to another. They baptise children, instruct the faithful, and whenever possible they recite the Communion service, offering Spiritual Communion to those who cannot come to church.

"All the believers are closely united. Sectarians, such as Baptists, Evangelists and others, Old Believers and even Mohammedans pray together in the same church but at different times. They have their own altar each in a different corner of the church. Holy Communion is given to all.

"Although I live now in peace and comfort which anybody could envy, my heart aches for those Russian martyrs and I feel ashamed of my well-being. I do not know why God has sent me this happiness. I have seen my children; they are well, work, and love me; and, what is more, believe in God and in Russia's happy future."

MAN AND SOCIETY

There has been a large demand for the recent supplement on "Educating for a Free Society" (C.N.L. 14) and it has become the subject of active discussion in many quarters. The questions which it raises are more fully treated in Professor's Clarke's volume in the Christian News-Letter Books *Education and Social Change* (Sheldon Press, 1s.), which I strongly recommend to those who want to get a large grasp of the subject. To this discussion Mr. T. S. Eliot makes this week a challenging contribution. He deals with the vital question of the spirit by which the framework set forth in the earlier supplement and in Professor Clarke's book should be animated.

It seems to me beyond question that the key to the kind of society we want is education. But I often wish that one could find some other name for this key. In the minds of many people the term has too many associations with school desks and boredom and technical administrative problems and controversies about Church schools to evoke the right response.

I will try to state the questions with which these two supplements are concerned in more human terms.

The discussion of Mr. H. G. Wells' Charter of Rights was begun in *Illustrated* before the debate started in the *Daily Herald*. That magazine in its issue of January 20th contains three portraits of Neville Mooney. I am sure that most of you have never heard of him. Neville Mooney was born at 11.15 a.m. on Sunday, September 3rd, 1939, at the moment that Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons was declaring war. The portraits show him to be a fascinating person. Besides a portrait of him by himself there is a full page picture of his father and mother watching him in his bath and another of him in his father's arms.

Everyone who has made Neville's acquaintance in this way will read the accompanying text, which is concerned with the question of the kind of world in which he and others of his generation are going to live when they grow up. To answer that question we must bring into the picture Neville's father, mother, brothers, sisters, nurse, school-teacher, leisure-leader, vicar, employer and many others. But that is not all. Beyond these direct personal influences, and to a large extent determining them,

re the manifold indirect influences of the institutions under which Neville has to live. These limit in countless directions the kind of man he can and will be.

These are the questions which the two supplements open up and there are no more fundamental questions that can be asked. There still remain important aspects of the subject which must be brought in to complete the picture and I propose to deal with some of these in future issues.

A CORRECTION

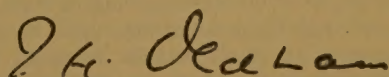
The Bishop of St. Albans tells me that, as I suspected, I have misunderstood the meaning of his letter to *The Times*. He did not intend to suggest a policy of imposing authoritatively a creed on the whole community. What he desires is that in the national system of education there should be freedom for the Christian faith to be taught, and that it should be taught by teachers qualified to teach it by their knowledge of it, personal belief in it, and definite practice of it. Only in that respect would he like his country to follow the example of Stalin and Hitler.

I am sorry I misrepresented the Bishop's meaning. I believe it would be better, however, if his view were considered on its merits, without the reference to the totalitarian systems which seems to me confusing. These attempt to impose forcibly on the community through every educational influence a total view of life. That certainly has obvious advantages in contrast with our own society in which a variety of contradictory educational influences cancel each other out. Our chief need as a nation is a common social purpose; and I should wish that purpose to be shot through to the greatest possible extent with Christian values. But just in so far as that purpose is Christian, it will be something very different from totalitarianism.

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER

I should like again to thank our many members who sent the News-Letter to their friends as a Christmas gift. The gift subscriptions for a period of three months terminate with this issue. We are hoping that the recipients have found the News-Letter of sufficient value to subscribe for themselves. The resources, and consequently the possibilities, of the News-Letter depend on an increasing circulation and every renewal helps the cause forward.

Yours sincerely,



Subscriptions.—The rate of subscriptions to the News-Letter is 10s. (\$3 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year, and 5s. 6d. (\$1.50 in U.S.A. and Canada) for six months, and 3s. for three months.

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THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET,
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NOTES

Education in War Time.—It has not been possible to find space earlier for a summary of the facts relating to education in war time, which were brought out in the debate that took place in the House of Lords on February 7th on the motion of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

It will be recalled that the original evacuation scheme of the Government provided for the transfer of some three millions of people. The number actually moved was 1,381,000. Half a million children were not evacuated at all.

The following facts were brought out in the debate.

(1) Of the 735,000 children who were evacuated 43 per cent. have returned to their homes.

(2) In the evacuated areas between 400,000 and 500,000 children have received no education of any kind in the period from September to January.

(3) An even more serious result of the dislocation is that the children have been deprived of medical services, school meals and cheap milk.

(4) Schools are now being reopened in the evacuated areas, and part-time education is being provided for a considerable number of those over eleven.

(5) The President of the Board of Education stated that the time had come to see that every child goes to school somewhere, and that the moment accommodation can be provided in the evacuation areas attendance must be enforced. Full-time schooling must be the objective; but if only half-time education can be provided for children over eleven, attendance should be enforced to that extent, and at least half-time provision for all children will be expected by the beginning of April.

(6) The local authorities have been told to resume all their health services, and the Minister of Health is co-operating by putting at their disposal the staff and buildings of the First Aid Posts—a concentration of medical effort greater than anything previously attempted.

(7) In neutral areas, where there are approximately one and a quarter million children, 95 per cent. are now in school, and the majority of them full-time.

(8) In the reception areas the number of evacuated children is about 400,000, and it is

estimated that between 80 and 90 per cent. of these are working under full-time control.

(9) In secondary schools, out of 470,000 children only 154,800 are at present receiving full-time education. A steady effort is being made to improve the position.

(10) The Government is pressing forward with the construction of camps, and twenty of these have already been allocated to schools.

(11) There are approximately 1,750,000 boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Less than half of these are receiving some help from voluntary organisations, but for the most part only for a very brief period.

Opportunities in Time of War.—The National Society of the Church of England (69, Great Peter Street, London, S.W.1) has issued a pamphlet entitled "Evangelism through Education" (price 1d.). It describes the new opportunities presented by war conditions and the way in which advantage is being taken of them in various parishes.

Among the facts of outstanding interest are the following:—

The parish church as the place of worship and the centre of the life of the community has become familiar to evacuated children, for many of whom corporate worship is a new experience.

Clergy, ministers and day-school teachers are being drawn into closer fellowship.

The Churches have been given a new opportunity of helping youth by the invitation to co-operate with the National Youth Committee.

War-time conditions are presenting new openings for adult religious education.

Religious Teaching in the Home.—Reference was made in *C. N. L.* No. 13 to a series of picture leaflets issued by the National Society of the Church of England. The Council of Christian Education (representing the Free Churches) has also issued material for "Bible Teaching at Home." This includes a Primary Lesson Book for children under eight and Junior Lesson Book for those who are older. The price of each is 4d. The lessons are also issued in separate leaflet form for the children to read. They may be obtained from the Sunday School Departments of the denominations or from the Religious Education Press, 85, Manor Road, Wallington, Surrey.

MARCH 13th, 1940

EDUCATION IN A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

My Dear Oldham,—My only justification for attempting to write about education in a Christian society is that no one else has so far done so. The problems of education in a secular society—but perhaps the right word is neither *secular* nor *pagan*, but *infidel*—have been dealt with again and again by those who can speak from vocation, knowledge and experience; and some of the writers who speak with authority on these problems are men of strong Christian convictions. And the subject of religious instruction in schools, under contemporary conditions, is receiving a good deal of attention. My subject is education in a society which should be Christian in the sense and to the degree indicated in my book *The Idea of a Christian Society*. I was not there concerned with the means to be employed to bring such a society into existence; and I am not here concerned with the means of realising a Christian education. Yet I maintain that it is well to have some notion of where we want to go before we arrange to start upon a journey; and, accordingly, while I am concerned with the end and not the means, I believe that our conception of the end should not be wholly without influence upon our action.

WHAT IS OUR END?

The lack of any clear notion of the end seems to me to impair much contemporary discussion of education. One error into which we may fall is that of assuming that our social framework is always going to be what it has been and elaborating our reforms within that frame: this might be described as an attempt to give our fathers and grandfathers a better education—and our fathers and grandfathers are no longer in need of any re-education that we could give them. The other mistake, and one to which in these times we are more prone,

is to plan for a “changing world”—but on the assumption, that we all too readily make, that we have a pretty shrewd idea of what the changes are going to be. This form of gambling has the disadvantage that however the world changes—and I concede that our world is likely to change with great rapidity—a great deal of the change will be unexpected, and some of it unrecognised when it comes. It is like cutting clothes for a child which is growing fast, but not at a steady rate and in regular proportions: the child will always be finding itself in a new suit which doesn’t fit, and which never will fit. All that we can say for such reforms is that, if they do not give us a better education, they will at least give us one which is not wrong in the same respects. Prudence advises us to restrict our reforms to patching and changing here and there, not committing ourselves to a desperate hazard on what the future is going to be like. But at the same time reason counsels us to avoid surrendering ourselves either to a present which is already past or to a future which is unknown, and to look below the surface of apparent fixity or inscrutable change in search of those educational values which can be regarded as permanent. We hear a good deal of “social philosophy” and of the “philosophy of education,” as well as of the “sociological attitude”: but if the philosophy is to be more than a philosophy of flux, it must endeavour to determine what are these permanent values.

THE ESSENTIAL VALUES

I suggest that the values which we most ignore, the recognition of which we most seldom find in writings on education, are those of Wisdom and Holiness, the values of the sage and of the saint. I have no need, in the Christian News-Letter, to attempt to

define these terms ; but it is as well to remind ourselves, that there are innumerable people to-day to whom the terms would be meaningless even if I defined them. In the East, and in pre-Christian Europe, the sage and the saint have been hardly distinguishable from each other. We must recognise the truth in both the Oriental and the Christian views. In the East, it must be remembered, the sage as the educated man at the highest stage—the *sadhu*, or *mahatma*, or whatever other word you use—was a person who had educated his emotions and sensibility, as well as his mind, by the most arduous application to study. The Christian West, on the other hand, while ready to recognise and to canonise the union of intellectual and spiritual excellence in one person (St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross are two types of such union) has held a doctrine of divine grace unknown to the Orient, and has always recognised saintliness in the humble and unlearned as well. I believe, of course, that Christianity is right ; but Christianity in its decayed forms could learn much from the East. For our tendency has been to identify wisdom with knowledge, saintliness with natural goodness, to minimise not only the operation of grace but self-training, to divorce holiness from education. Education has come to mean education of the mind only ; and an education which is only of the mind—of the mind in its restricted modern sense—can lead to scholarship, to efficiency, to worldly achievement and to power, but not to wisdom.

What is known as “education for culture” and what is known as “character-building” are the atrophied vestiges of wisdom and holiness. In a Christian Society we should not educate primarily either for culture or for character ; but culture and character might be by-products of our education, as technical efficiency would be incidental to it.

THREE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

In this context I may refer to the classification of Max Weber, which, as I only know it at second hand, I should be diffident in mentioning, but that it may be known to readers of this paper from Professor Clarke’s *Education and Social Change*. Weber distinguishes three main

types of education throughout history : *charismatic education*, *education for culture*, *specialist education*. I shall not criticise such a classification without having read the defence of it, which no doubt the inventor gives. As an account of historical process from primitive times to the present day, it may be very satisfactory within the author’s frame of reference. The term *charismatic education* does not sound very happy, inasmuch as “charismatic” means “pertaining to a favour or grace from God” ; and the relation between grace and education is not clear. But it probably meant more to Professor Weber than it does to Professor Clarke : to whom, in the book I have just mentioned, it seems to mean hardly more than the practice by which Sir John Falstaff lost his voice—“halloing and singing of anthems.” Professor Mannheim defines charismatic education clearly by saying that it—

is dominant in the magical period or in periods in which religion reaches its highest point. In the first case it wants to arouse hidden powers latent in man, in the second to awaken religious intuition and the inner readiness for transcendental experience. In both cases the predominant aim is not the transfer of a certain concrete content or skill but that of stirring up certain innate powers which are, if not superhuman, at least the limited possession of the chosen.

I can hardly suppose that this is meant to comprehend the whole of the education of the “primitive races” any more than of the higher races in their religious phase ; because in the highly organised societies of Polynesia, surely, you can find all three types of education, charismatic, cultural and specialised very well co-ordinated. And in the higher religious education of India a great deal of what Mannheim, in the passage quoted above, calls “transfer of concrete contents” takes place : the study of the sacred Scriptures. Nevertheless, the category of charismatic education seems to approximate most nearly of the three to what I mean by the central values of Christian education—with this reservation, that it looks very different from the inside.

WHAT TYPE OF MAN?

At this point, I make no doubt, many readers will have come to the conclusion that I am quite prepared to dispense altogether, in the Christian Society, with everything that they know and value by the name of education—to the conclusion, in fact, that my goal is in effect a relapse into barbarism. I will say, therefore, in the hope that it may help, that I am not anxious to scrap anything, and that I recognise the need for laboratories and technical schools, as well as for institutions for the study of history and philosophy and ancient and modern languages, in any future society that I can desire or imagine. I am not envisaging, either, a society of saints or adepts. The important question is: What is the type of man which society holds in highest honour? What is the type of man—below the heights of the greatest genius or of the greatest infusion of grace—which it is proudest to produce? Whatever ideals a society maintains (and it is not necessarily conscious of what its real ideals are) will insensibly influence its whole system of education, will affect the way in which it teaches, the way in which it acquires, the way in which it uses, the most apparently remote or specialised disciplines.

There is certainly no system to which we can go back. The ideals of *The Governour*, the ideals of John Locke, those of Thomas Arnold, are all equally exhausted and inapplicable to any future Christian society. And while wisdom and holiness are, of course, unchanging, yet the technique of attaining them will change, and the technique of inculcating a right attitude toward them on the part of the vast majority of human beings who can attain as a minimum (and it is no small thing to attain) the right attitude toward them—the right attitude which is the starting point from which salvation may be come by.

The scope of education is no longer the task of merely training individuals in and for a society, but also the much larger task of training a society itself—without our having any fundamental accepted principles on which to train it. The scope of education has been rapidly expanding as social organisms have broken down and been replaced by the mechanisation which increases, while

it manipulates, the atomisation of individuals.

IMMEDIATE REFORMS

There results a good deal of confusion of motives about the immediate reforms that are advocated. A case in point is that of the school-leaving age. I do not hold any fixed opinion as to what this age should be. I am quite prepared to be persuaded that under the conditions in which the greater part of our population lives, there is everything to be said for raising the age to 18. I only suggest that we ought to consider whether it should not be our purpose to change these conditions, rather than merely adapt our system of education to them. It is better that boys and girls should be at school than that they should be subject to industrial exploitation, in an environment where family influence is negligible or even harmful, and where local community does not exist. But a change which is all to the good in certain circumstances is not necessarily a change for the better *absolutely*; and it makes all the difference whether we acknowledge that such a change is merely making the best of a bad job, or whether we pretend that it is good in itself. Is this further education necessarily going to make the majority wiser or better people?

I am excepting the number of those who possess the ability to acquire special techniques—as of the various kinds of engineering; assuming that their being trained to exercise this ability will be of advantage to society. But it is at least an open question, whether for the majority of human beings there is not an optimum amount of school instruction, and an optimum amount of knowledge, that they are able to acquire without excessive and deleterious strain. It is at least an open question, whether we can not injure society and the individual as much by *over*-education, as by not providing enough.

I do not wish to prejudice the answers to such questions; I only say that they ought to be raised, and that they can only be rightly answered if we keep hold of the right ultimate values of education, and if we see the problems of education in right relation to the problems of society, and hold the right values there also.

OPPORTUNITY FOR WHAT?

I cannot help suspecting, however, that it is possible that education, in the meaning of the word which it has in contemporary society, is over-valued—by being contrasted simply with the *absence of itself*, and not with anything positive. With this thought in mind, I think that the claims of “equalisation of opportunity,” and the “democratisation of education” ought to be scrutinised very carefully. I trust that no one will suppose me to be a defender of a social order and an educational system based upon income—the best thing to be said for which is that it manages to keep up some *pretence* of being based upon breeding. I am only apprehensive lest, as is so common in human affairs, we see the defects and dangers of the system we would institute less clearly than those of that which we would replace. The concept of “opportunity” can be a very dangerous one if we are not severe in our standards of what it is desirable to have opportunity *for*. Unless society can exercise some unconscious pressure upon its members to want the right things, the right life, the opportunity given may be merely the opportunity to follow false lights, the opportunity to follow aims for which the individual is unsuited, or which are not to the advantage of society. There will (I hope) always be a few individuals who will follow their own aims, independent of the social influences by which they are surrounded, unfettered by fear or flattery: it is probably to the advantage of society, even, that it should nourish a few anti-social people. But for the great majority, “opportunity” may be no more than opportunity to aim to excel (or at least keep their end up) at whatever the people with whom they associate think admirable. I am not the enemy of opportunity; I only say that in providing opportunity you are assuming a very grave responsibility. Unless, at least, you hold a doctrine of the natural goodness of

man (and even so you can hardly avoid admitting the corruption of society) you have the responsibility of inculcating the right values.

Equalisation of opportunity, then, and democratisation of education, are in danger of becoming uncriticised dogmas. They can come to imply, as an ultimate, a complete mobility of society—and of an *atomised* society. I mean by this that many of those who hold these two principles may be unconsciously carrying them over from nineteenth-century liberalism—and in so far as they spring from liberalism they may end in totalitarianism. It is to think of the individual in isolation, apart from family and from local milieux, as having certain intellectual and sensitive capacities to be nurtured and developed to their full extent; and of a system of education as a vast calculating machine which would automatically sort out each generation afresh according to a culture-index of each child. The result might be to produce a race of spiritual nomads. Again, I wish only to raise issues, not to prejudice them. But it seems to me that there is a danger in simplifying the concept of society into the individual and the nation, and ignoring all the organic groupings in between; and it seems to me possible that in a healthy society there must be an element of fixity *and* an element of mobility, and that the problem lies in this adjustment.

These considerations may seem to have taken me far afield from the main point of this letter—the affirmation of the end values of Christian education as wisdom and holiness. I hope that anyone who makes this comment at this point may be persuaded to read again what I have said, and give me the benefit of another hearing; for I feel confident that it is only in the light of these two values that what I have just been saying can be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

T. S. ELIOT.

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